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ECCLESIOLOGIES IN DIALOGUE

CATHOLIC ECCLESIOLOGY
AND THE CHALLENGES IT FACES TODAY

Kuncheria Pathil

CSI ECCLESIOLOGY
SOME ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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THE CONCEPT OF THE CHURCH
A LUTHERAN PERSPECTIVE

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BOOK REVIEWS

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JEEVADHARA

The People of God

ECCLESIOLOGIES IN DIALOGUE

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Editorial

The contemporary thinking on the Church, especially that of the Second Vatican Council, has clarified two important points: First the Church is a mystery; it has a divine origin and it is invisibly guided by Christ and his Spirit; it is not a mere human institution. Therefore no amount of socio-cultural analysis will adequately explain the Church and its mission. The second point is more important for us. The actual form, structures, articulations of its faith and patterns of ministry and worship are products of history, conditioned by the society and culture of the time. It means the Church in history is subjected to continuous change. The historical Church should be subjected to socio-cultural analysis and should be continuously changed. Refusal to change the historical forms and structures of the Church is disobedience to the Lord; it is a serious sin.

The present number of *Jeevadhara* on "Ecclesiologies in Dialogue" was planned to illustrate this historical character of the Churches. Representatives from different Churches were asked to articulate the self-understanding of their Churches at the backdrop of their historical transformations. They were asked to spell out the challenges and their new experience from the background of the Ecumenical Movement. But we could not fully accomplish what we wanted. We have here three representatives — Catholic, CSI and Lutheran — who could contribute to this ecclesiological dialogue.

The historical development of Catholic ecclesiology, the changes made by the Second Vatican Council and the challenges to Catholic ecclesiology today are discussed by Kuncheria Pathil. The challenge today is that the Church should become primarily the Church or *ekklesia* or fellowship. It should be a community of communities. The goal of the Church is not itself, but the Kingdom of God. The question today is this: Is the Church really and fully involved in the world today

for the promotion and creation of the Kingdom of God? It is a common task of all Churches, religions and ideologies. How should we work together for a new world?

Formation of the Church of South India in 1948 was a creative response of the Churches to the challenges of the time. The C S I was formed as a union of Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches in South India with a total membership of about 1.5 million. K. C. Abraham writes about the vision and guiding principles that governed the formation of the C S I and examines the new issues and challenges. The Churches in the C S I started a journey together in search of an authentically Indian Church, united and equipped for mission. Did they realize unity or are they immersed in new divisions in the name of caste, language and region? How far has their mission today become more effective and relevant?

The United Evangelical Lutheran Churches of India is a federation of nine Lutheran Churches in India with a total membership of about one million. It's representative D.W. Jesudoss, makes a contribution here not as a Lutheran, but as an Indian Christian. He thinks that if Luther were alive today he would have said the exact opposite of what he had said in the 16th century. What is important is not the letter but the spirit. He highlights the prophetic role of the Church today and invites the Church to become fully a "Church for others".

"Ecclesiologies in Dialogue" is an invitation to change. Dialogue must be continued between the Churches, between the Church and the world, between various religions and cultures on our way to the Kingdom of God. Our vision is a new heaven and a new earth. We invite our readers to start a dialogue within themselves, with their own self-understanding as Christians and humans in the context of today's radical challenges.

CSI Ecclesiology Some Issues and Challenges

Marthagavalt David, wife of a pastor and mother of two children, was ordained presbyter of the Church of South India on May 28, 1989 by the Bishop of the Diocese of South Kerala, C. S. I. She being the first woman priest in Kerala churches, even the secular press thought it fit to report the ordination widely. Mrs. David is not the first woman in the CSI to be ordained. Eleven other women in the dioceses of Andhra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have already been ordained and are serving as full time presbyters of the CSI. There have been fierce opposition, court cases and threats from die-hards against this, but today most members generally accept and approve the ministry of these women as equal to their male counterparts.

If the vitality of a church can be judged by its ability to respond creatively to the challenges of the times, then Church of South India has shown itself to be a live church. In fact, its origin and the way it has shaped its ecclesiology, the Church of South India has demonstrated its willingness to face new challenges and not to be rigidly bound by traditions. In this sense, it is a journeying church, growing into the unity and freedom that Christ has offered to the humanity. The journey is not smooth, but hazardous. Some are unwilling to go all the way; they need to settle down. They have vested interests, positions to safeguard, riches to be consolidated. Some are fixed and have lost all sense of direction. There are parties and groupings and they battle with one another. With all these it struggles on to realize the will of its master, who prayed that they may be one.

This paper attempts to do three things: One, to restate the vision and guiding principles that governed the formation of the Church of South India as they are still valid for any church that is committed to serving its Lord in the present

day context. Two, to discuss the question whether the life of the Church today conforms to its original vision or not. And three, in the light of our critical assessment, to raise new issues and challenges which the whole church in India should face in its life and mission. I shall confine myself to the Church of South India, although much of the discussion, I presume, will be relevant to the Church of North India.

I

National and missionary

Formed in 1947, Church of South India was the union of four major Protestant denominations in South India: Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists. It was acclaimed to be the first union between episcopal and non-episcopal churches, an epoch-making event. The national context in which the union took place is significant. The year 1947 is important for the general history of our country. The freedom we won that year from the foreign rule was also the cumulative effect of a cultural process which might be described as the gaining of a new national consciousness. The feeling of belonging to one nation and a critical look at the national heritage embedded in our culture and religions were the ingredients of people's emerging consciousness. All aspects of our life were sifted through the prism of nationalism.

Formation of the Church of South India was in a sense the Church's response to the challenge of nationalism. The Church in India, by and large, is the product of Western Missionary enterprise. Its theology, worship, structure and polity were influenced by the churches of the missionaries. We transplanted all the denominational divisions without giving any thought about their cultural and historical antecedents which were germane to the European context. The church thus became a potted plant, refusing to strike root in the Indian soil. The process of decolonization of the churches was started in the 1900s. Bold experiments of De Nobili in the Catholic church and the Asram movements in the Protestant churches were efforts to make a positive response to Indian heritage. The advent of the Church of South India was hailed as the birth of an Indian national church. The founding fathers of the C. S. I. declared:

"The Church of South India desires, conserving all that is of spiritual value in its Indian heritage, to express under Indian conditions and in Indian forms, the spirit, the thought and the life of the Church Universal."

Earlier the decisions affecting the day to day life of the churches were taken by mission boards in London or New York. Key administrative positions were held by foreigners and they were entirely dependent on foreign funding. It must, however, be noted that leading mission societies knew fully well the need for ecumenical co-operation. Each of them by mutual understanding set boundaries to its area of work and unhealthy competition was avoided. This has paved the way for a healthier union of all the churches.

The church becomes truly national when it takes seriously the local situation. The underlying conviction about the Church is that "the local Christian fellowship is the Church"¹. One of the Bishops of C. S. I has this to say about it:

"The Church in any place is the local Church in the sense that there the Holy Spirit creates a localized community, the Church of God which is in that place. It is *not* the local Church in any sense of being less truly the Church than some organized body of Christians within a larger area. More especially, it is not the local Church in the sense that it derives its existence and authority as the Church by delegation from or through any wider organization or that its relation to its Lord is a mediated rather than a direct presence. The Lord of the Church is there and therefore His Church is there. He is not partly there and therefore His Church is not partly there, or there by derivation from some wider organization."²

Each congregation gathered for the proclamation of the word and the celebrations of the Eucharist becomes the locale of the Church Universal. The purpose of unity of the church is not to create a transnational organization but to affirm the centrality of the congregation that celebrates God's Gift of Christ.

The C. S. I. is certainly conscious of the reality of the church that transcends all national boundaries – One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic. There is need for world wide fellowship and inter-dependence of churches in all situations.

The C. S. I. in this sense was meant to be a first step towards the reunion of all the churches throughout the world. The constitution of C. S. I. says: "The Church of South India acknowledges that in every effort to bring together divided members of Christ's body into one organization the final aim must be the union in Universal Church of all who acknowledge the name of Christ."

It is acknowledged that "one of the most powerful urges that brought the uniting churches together was their evangelistic zeal and fervour"³. The Church is national but it should be missionary. The church pledged to be mindful of its missionary calling and prayed "that it may not only be greatly used of God for the evangelization of South India, but may also take its due share in the preaching of the Gospel and the building up of Christ's church in other parts of the world" (*The Constitution of the Church of South India*: Ch:113). The church further declares: "It is the primary duty of every member of the Church to witness by life and word to Jesus Christ, who came into the world to save sinners. This work of evangelization may be done both individually and by groups, and should include special methods, such as lyrical preaching and the distribution of the scriptures and other evangelistic literature." (*Constitution*: Ch VI Rules 1 & 26)

The early pronouncements on mission give a great deal of stress on direct evangelization that ensued after the first synod where a broader framework for interpreting mission is discernible. Witnessing to the gospel in the social and political context was a theme developed by the synod that met in 1962. A resolution passed by this synod is a landmark concerning church's thinking on social questions.

"The Synod believes that the social revolution now taking place in India is a manifestation of the eternal purpose and judgement of God in human history. It believes that the Church is created by God to be a people holy unto the Lord and to seek the establishment of righteousness, mercy and love in human society. It therefore calls the members of the Church of South India at this critical time to a serious and prayerful consideration of the implications of this belief for their worship, work and witness in a changing India."⁴

The Synod called upon all Christian institutions, congregations and individuals to take seriously their responsibilities in relation to:

1. The need to offer the love and compassion of God in Christ to all sorts and conditions of men;
2. The need to establish within the life of the Church a fellowship transcending distinctions of caste and class;
3. The need that each Christian should be a politically conscious and responsible citizen;
4. The need to witness to the Kingdom of God, to set forth and establish in society both the love and the righteousness of God in Christ.
5. The need to make Christians in 'secular occupation' realize that their occupations themselves which supply the physical and economical needs of society are also in the plan and purpose of God for the total redemption of society⁵.

A new orientation to mission was also given when the C. S. I. emphasised the need for inter-faith dialogue. In one of the documents we have this pointed assertion: "Evangelism is not a one way communication but it is both listening and speaking. It is not speaking at a particular time fixed beforehand but it should be spontaneous. It should be an every day occasion, not just sometimes made use of and at other times a missed opportunity."⁶

In this connection it is good to recall that Rajaiah D. Paul, the general secretary of C. S. I. for many years lamented the practice of "cramming the minds of our would-be spiritual leaders, while they are in theological colleges, with western theology and give them no chance to learn, understand and appreciate the spiritual traditions and discoveries of ancient Hinduism about God and man"⁷.

Ministry and structure

A distinctive feature of the C. S. I. related to the interpretation given to church offices and structure that it wanted to evolve. In the early negotiations between the partner churches there was a general feeling that on matters of doctrines (faith) they could easily agree but questions concerning order there could be differences. To a large extent they all are influenced by the Protestant reformation. But

divergences regarding the church structure arose out of their different perceptions and practice of ministry. The church, after a great deal of consultations, accepted the three-fold ministry but endeavoured to give new interpretations. The conviction commonly shared was that the primary focus and function of ministry should be pastoral and not administrative or ritual. For example, C. S. I. does not use the title "Priest" but prefers "Presbyter". The minister is not just a *poojari*.

Far more notable is its interpretation given for episcopacy — a controversial issue — that a majority of partners never had bishops in their church. It has accepted the historic apostolic succession. The churches especially those from the non-episcopal churches also accepted episcopacy as "an effective instrument for the deepening of unity within the church". But at the same time it refuses to believe "that churches without episcopacy are not true churches". It is important to point out that the *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM) document accepted by the Faith and Order commission in which Roman Catholic members were present, agrees to a similar position. It affirms "episcopal succession as a sign, though not a guarantee, of the continuity and unity of the church". And adds, "the churches, including those engaged in union negotiations, are expressing willingness to accept episcopal succession as a sign of the apostolicity of the life of the whole church. Yet, at the same time, they cannot accept any suggestion that the ministry exercised in their own tradition should be invalid until the moment that it enters into an existing line of episcopal succession. Their acceptance of the episcopal succession will best further the unity of the whole church if it is part of a wider process by which the episcopal churches themselves also regain their lost unity"⁸.

The Basis of Union⁹ clearly stated the new understanding of episcopacy in these words: "The relation of the bishop to his people should be that of Chief pastor and father-in-God, and that he is called to feed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof as Shepherd, not as Lord, either in act or in title but as an example to the flock". In his report to the Synod in 1952, the Hon. General Secretary made the following observations about the distinct characteristic of a C.S.I. Bishop:

"Our bishops have begun to play a part in the life of the Church which corresponds more truly to the original apostolic pattern of spiritual service and leadership. They are rapidly coming to be thought of as the chief pastors of the flock, fathers in God of the whole congregation in the Diocese, visible embodiments of an authority derived from something much wider than the local Church and much higher than the Diocesan Council which elected them can give. They are being increasingly recognised as representatives in the diocese of the Church Universal; and as having derived their spiritual authority directly from Christ the Head of the Church. It is increasingly accepted that, by virtue of their office to which they have been called of God and for which they have been specially equipped by Him by a unique and special gift of His Holy Spirit, they have certain distinctive and wholly spiritual functions to perform in the Church."¹⁰

Underlying the reinterpretations of the nature and function of episcopacy and other forms of ministry is the conviction that ministry is of the whole people of God. All members are called to participate in the task of building up the Church. In this sense Church is a community endeavour. Ordained or even specialised ministry should be seen in this context.

Concrete expression of unity

A notable feature of the C. S. I., and C. N. I. too, is the model of church unity it projects. It has maintained that the unity should be concretely expressed in organic and organizational relationships. The church is one in its institutional expression. There are, of course, administrative units that are divided according to the size, region and language. But they are part of one structure. The Church of North India formed in 1970 has also accepted the same model of unity. Of course, in recent years questions have been raised about the suitability of the CSI/CNI model of church unity and new models of unity are being considered in the wider ecumenical movement, e.g., Conciliar unity. We cannot hold up one model as equally applicable to all times and situations. But the merit of the C. S. I. model is in its concreteness, and in the absence of a more definite pattern we need to affirm its historical importance.

From the foregoing one may be justified in saying that the C. S. I. is a new experiment in ecclesiology. It is committed to become a national church deeply rooted in Indian realities. It wants to take seriously its missionary calling by witnessing to the transforming power of the Gospel of Jesus in all the realms of life. It seeks an institutional form that is a vehicle for the whole ministry of the people of God. It is prepared to give new meaning and context to inherited structures and patterns of ministry. The question is how far all these newly found gods have become a reality in the life of the church. To this we will turn our attention in the next section.

II

Prospects and problems

It is presumptuous on our part to attempt to make a critical assessment of the life of the C. S. I. during the last forty two years. But fortunately the Church has periodically made an effort to evaluate itself and reports have been published. We will rely mostly on them.

Growing unity

When the C. S. I. even formed in 1947 many predicted that it will not last long and that soon the denominationalism will divide the church. It is true in the beginning people were accustomed to speak of themselves as Ex-Anglicans, Ex-Methodists, Ex-Congregationalists and Ex-Presbyterians, especially the life in dioceses which brought together different denominational traditions, had to face these tensions. But soon denominational differences disappeared. Seldom either in the Synod meetings or Diocesan Councils we hear people vote along the lines of their previous denominational origins. In fact the C. S. I. identity has been deeply entrenched. In the beginning, there had been churches, especially in some urban and semi-urban areas which tried to maintain their earlier identities particularly with regard to worship, rituals and other practices. They were even particular to have clergy from their own background to minister to them. But the situation is totally different today. St. Mark's Cathedral, Bangalore is a good example. It was, before union, an Anglican church with

high church leanings. Even when they became part of the C. S. I. they maintained a lot of liturgical traditions of the old. They used the order of worship according to the Book of Common Prayer (Anglican) till early 1980s. And the clergy appointed in this church till 1988 were all from Anglican background. But today the Church has fully integrated into C. S. I. It follows the C. S. I. liturgy and the present incumbent as presbyter is from a Methodist background. People seem to have ceased using ex-labels. This is not surprising. The denominational divisions were artificially created and imposed upon the people in India. They were perpetuated by vested interests. People were eager to throw them off and be free from such shackles.

Two factors that helped in this process of integration should be specially noted. One is the uniformity in worship. The C. S. I. liturgy is a carefully drawn out order of service incorporating elements from the worship services in other traditions. This was never made compulsory for the churches, but today in all the churches the Eucharist is celebrated according to this newly drawn out liturgy. More participation for the laity and free liturgical movements and contemporary concerns in prayer are some of the features of this. But the liturgy formulated about forty years ago needs to be updated. It is still foreign and there is need to develop "forms of worship" more expressive of indigenous spiritual heritage. C. S. I. constitution has correctly stated its goal: "The Church of South India desires ... conserving all that is of value in its Indian heritage, to express under Indian conditions and in Indian terms the spirit, the thought and the life of the Church Universal." While the present liturgy has drawn the people together, the C. S. I. has not been able to evolve an indigenous liturgy. The basic structure and form of the present liturgy is western. Especially when they are translated into Indian languages and used in a rural setting, it sounds so utterly foreign. The collects are hardly reflective of the realities of rural life in India and no serious effort is made to incorporate Indian symbols in the worship.

The other factor that helped the process of integration is the organizational set-up. The churches from different tra-

ditions in a given geographical area belong to one diocese with the bishop as the focus of unity. People from different church traditions and different ethnic and language backgrounds together participate in one diocesan council. There are tensions and conflicts which will be discussed presently. But they have demonstrated a unity that cuts across different barriers.

However, the question of disunity continues to plague the church. It is not the disunity created by denominationalism, but by the divisions of caste, language and region. Not seldom is voting in the church councils divided along caste and language lines. The Report of the Special Committee appointed for evaluating the life of the Church after thirty years since union has this frank observation to make:

“Unity in our Church is often marred by casteism and parochialism which raise their ugly heads at the time of elections to the various committees and councils of the Church at different levels creating quarrelsome factions and divisions in the Church. Sometimes such factional dimensions and conflicts bring the entire work of the diocese or pastorate to a standstill.”

“Lack of integration in the Church is also reflected in the widespread tendency of the people to take to agitational methods and law suits in order to get their ‘legitimate’ or ‘illegitimate’ grievances redressed. Many dioceses have been plagued by all sorts of unnecessary litigations and agitations which poison the whole atmosphere of the Church. Many people run to courts on the least pretext undermining the authority of the Church and its properly constituted councils and committees and officers.”¹¹

In India the problem of Church unity has to be raised at two different levels. There is the ecumenical unity that is achieved by the merger of churches. But the unity of the people who derive their identity from their ethnic loyalties is also a matter to be seriously considered. Christians in India have multiple identities and there is an inevitable clash between them. They combine in their consciousness an ethnic identity (caste, communal group, language, etc.) and a Christian identity. But in actual practice, the ethnic identity takes

precedence and the Christian identity is subsumed under it. The Christian identity which by its very nature is universalistic and other-oriented has very little impact in the day to day transactions of life. In the public life where one communal group is vying with another for power one is forced to assert one's separate ethnic identity. In the political situation which is a question of balancing power between communities, the Church also gets into the fray for its share of the national pie. Thus the broader line before the Church as a community and other communities is almost indistinct. Is a non-communal Christian *koinonia* possible?

Structure

The avowed goals of the church should be concretely expressed in the structure and ministry. The primacy of local congregation and the ministry of the whole people of God are the two such goals! The role and functions of bishops and presbyters have been given new interpretations. But in actual practice they seldom live by these goals.

The Report 'After Thirty Years' notes: "The structure gives dominant position to the pastorate and the diocese, neglecting the local congregation." The congregation is not the centre but the wider structure. The same report also points out that "the Bishops at the diocesan level and the presbyter at the pastorate level have emerged as powerful functionaries". The report continues: "It is generally believed that the Bishop is the lynch-pin of administration in the diocese. This phenomenon has tended to encourage centralization of authority and bureaucratic procedures even against the constitutional intent and purpose. Consequently, there is too much decision-making power at the top, too much apathy at the grass-roots and too much jockeying for positions in the middle."¹²

A concomitant problem of this concentration of power is that there is fierce contest for such positions. Elections to them have become scenes of unhealthy canvassing. In fact all the reports talk about the 'end of elections' and raise questions whether there could be a better way of deciding on positions in the church. As early as 1958 one of the Bishops of the C. S. I. spoke plainly about this. He lamented over "the unholy zeal and joy displayed in electioneering and dubious

methods of canvassing so often displayed, from the level of the local church committee right up to the election of a bishop"¹³. The situation has not changed; it has only worsened. The allegation is that even large amount of money was used to lure people during the time of bishop's election. This is a sad state of affairs. The episcopacy, the election to it and the practice of it, is in need of change as it failed to express the founding message.

One of the key questions that emerges is the use of power and authority in a church. In an authoritarian, male dominated culture like ours church structures are controlled by a few powerful men. In a consultation held in 1978 'on the community of women and men' there was a general agreement that "the decision making bodies of the church do not reflect the actual balance of the human community. It would be impossible for women to take a fuller part in the higher councils of the church, unless they are able to find places within the lower councils on the strength of their own ability and talent"¹⁴. The situation has slightly improved with the decision of the church to ordain women to the ministry. But this step may remain a mere token unless it is also followed by a conscious effort to enable women and other marginalised sections in the church to participate fully in the decision-making bodies.

Mission and social concern

As we have noted earlier, the principal good of union was for the church to become missionary. Therefore the ecclesiology of the C. S. I. is to be decisively shaped by its missionary purpose. Mission is not an activity but integral to the life of the church. It is this vision that guided the early leaders.

But the life of the church is hardly a witness to the gospel of Jesus. The church reflects the inequalities and discriminatory practices found in society at large. The awareness that the life of the church is integral to its mission is sometimes lacking. 'Practising God' in all our relationships is our mission.

Mission is also proclamation of the Good News. C. S. I. has expounded its mission programmes and even sent missio-

naires to other countries. But the Report: 'After Thirty Years' raises some pertinent questions to the theology and methodology of the evangelistic activity of the church. The Report says: "Evangelism at present is largely thought of as a programme of preaching campaigns conducted among non-baptised people (unevangelised area), going from outside the area or living in the area. Its success is measured by the number of individuals baptized." The Report adds, "There is need to understand Evangelism as the purpose of the Church's existence and as the obligation of every Christian. Evangelism is the proclamation by life, word, and deed of the message of salvation which Jesus Christ has brought to the world"¹⁵. Elsewhere it has been pointed out that "The arrogant attitude of religious superiority and triumphalism with which we have gone about in our evangelistic work has proved to be counter productive"¹⁶.

Mission of the Church is also expressed in its concern for society. In fact the service institutions like hospitals and schools are an integral part of the church's witness. There are also outstanding charitable institutions like orphanages and poor homes. The general feeling, however, is that these service institutions today tend to benefit the middle class. "The poor are not benefited. They cannot afford to come into our institutions like our hospitals, and in any case most of them do not even enter high school. The vast masses of our people are untouched."¹⁷

In recent years there has been notable pronouncements by the church on its responsibility to the society and the need for entering deeply into the struggles of the people for justice. An outstanding document was produced by the bishops and other leaders of the C. S. I. in 1976 on Church and Social Justice. It has suggested several steps the church should take in the area. But the Report "After Thirty Years", having considered all the church programmes on development and social concern has come to the conclusion:

"Development is still thought of in individualistic terms where individuals are helped with education, skill or help. Rarely is there attention on groups or communities developing together, and still less is there awareness of the need for trans-

forming structures.”¹³ The church is yet to demonstrate that it is in solidarity with the poor.

As is evident, all the above points of criticism are taken from official reports and documents. This merits our attention. The church has accepted a process of self-evaluation as integral to its life. It has helped the members to be conscious of their failures and to have a renewed commitment to the vision of the church. This certainly is a challenge to the traditional ecclesiology. Truth is not a frozen dogma but it evolves in interaction with people's questions and challenges. To provide an atmosphere of freedom and critical participation is necessary for the church's life and ministry. One sincerely hopes that this spirit of self criticism will not be smothered. These criticisms have helped us to see some of the issues for the future. To this we will turn our attention in the next section.

III

The message that comes through the formation and continuing life of the C. S. I., with all its problems and ambiguities, is clear. The church which is faithful to its master enters deeply into the realities of the context in which it is placed. The church becomes a sign and instrument of God's transforming act in a given situation. We need to seek new horizons of this founding message for our times. Our context is multi-religious. It is also shaped by powerful ideologies which are secular and humanistic. It is also a context where the poor and marginalised cry for justice. The dominant economic and social system continues to oppress people. All these realities raise new challenges to the churches. Here I should like to give special attention to three areas.

1) The challenge of wider ecumenism

We live in a pluralistic society and our life as Christians is intertwined with the life of people of their faiths. Our ministry should reflect and respond to the multi-religious context. In ecumenism we are committed to dialogue as a means of achieving wider unity with the people of all faiths and no faith. To some extent this has been continually present in the Indian Church. The Ashram movement that sprung up in the thirties and forties both in the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches is a notable example of this. The crusad-

ing attitude of Christians towards other religions gave way to a sympathetic and receptive encounter with people of other faiths. In the earlier stages of this approach, an attempt was made to evaluate the truth claims of each religion. Soon this comparative, theoretical approach reached a dead end and a more fruitful encounter has taken place in which the dialogue is focussed on concrete problems such as poverty, unjust structures and nation building which are faced by peoples of all faiths. Identifying the values we need to uphold and the way to realize them are the central concerns in such a dialogue. For this we need to use the resources available in all religions. Commitment to peace and justice is the essence of religious faith. This is a conviction shared by many people in all religions, not by Christianity alone.

An EATWOT consultation on 'Religion and Liberation' states that all religions, Christianity included, are in and to various degrees both oppressive and liberative. They are oppressive because they legitimize unjust social systems like apartheid and caste, and because they create their own special forms of religious unfreedom. But history shows that religions can be liberative too. They have inspired powerful movements of social protest (like Hebrew prophetism in monarchical Israel, or the bhakti movement in medieval India) which have attacked both the oppressive rigidity of the religious systems themselves as well as of the unjust socio-economic and political structures of the societies in which these religions flourished¹⁹.

It further states that in the Third World where all religions together face the challenges of enslaving social and cultural systems and the need to struggle for justice, religions should meet each other exploring and sharing their liberative elements. It calls for the development of a 'liberative ecumenism, that is, a form of inter-religious dialogue which is concerned not so much with doctrinal insights or spiritual experiences that different religions can offer one another, as with the contribution to human liberation that each can make'²⁰.

2) Justice-oriented ministry

An awareness that the struggle for justice is the context of ministry and a new vision of Christ as liberator, both these

elements have contributed to the emergence of new styles of ministry. One such form of ministry is that of the social action groups evolved in response to and in solidarity with the poor, who struggle for their dignity and justice. During the past two decades several such groups of young men and women have emerged. They have gone into organising landless, unorganised workers, fisherfolks, tribals, women and other marginalised groups. They are certainly Christ-inspired, but not necessarily controlled by ecclesiastical machinery. Moreover, the team of workers in each group is multi-religious and they work with people of all faiths. There are many clusters of these groups — prominent being the Urban Industrial Rural Mission (UIRM) and Programme for Social Action (PSA).

The objective of the group is well articulated in the following statement:

“Compassion for victims of a natural disaster or sick society is not enough, but that it is more important to engage in the struggle for justice alongside those who are victims. This meant working with all men of goodwill and organisations, irrespective of their affiliations to different religious or secular faiths, and not just with Christians. It also meant not seeking to manage programmes and activities as much as to be part of a movement for the renewal of man and society.”²¹

Initially the action groups have started to evolve among the marginalised sections of society with the specific intent of raising their critical consciousness against oppressive structures and to organise them to fight against oppression. In this process they have linked with the groups which are not Christians and become part of wider movements of people such as tribals, dalits and workers. This partnership influenced their style of functioning.

What is disheartening in the development of action groups' work, however, is the apparent conflict between them and the Church organisations. While the style and structure they have developed was necessary for their expression of solidarity with the marginalised, they have moved them further and further away from the institutional Church. The dialogue between them has not proved very constructive. The churches keep on raising questions, sometimes legitimate, about the

style and structure of action groups and peoples' movements, without showing any readiness to face the challenge posed by the vision and strategy (justice and collective action) for Church's ministry and mission. Can we not truly say that in a situation of poverty linked with unjust economic and political structures, justice-oriented ministry should be the preponderant form of Christian Ministry? If we face this challenge honestly, then the present forms of ministry and the Church structures that support them will also undergo drastic changes. For one thing our preaching and worship will authentically reflect the cries of the people for justice and our Church structures become catalysts for strengthening the struggle for all people and not just ghettos that preserve our narrow parochial interest — they truly become the salt of the earth.

What is the ecclesial experience that is embedded in them? Should we not consider it in our future discussion on Indian ecclesiology?

3) Solidarity with dalits

A vast majority of the C. S. I. members are dalits. But the church with its middle class leadership and powerful institutions project the image of a rich church. The question of dalits has been the subject of discussion at the Synods and the present General Secretary of the C. S. I., the Rev. M. Azariah, in season and out of season, passionately articulates the concern of the dalits. A new stage has come in the struggle of the dalits. They are not demanding charity but justice. They are fighting to recover their history, culture and spirituality which have been suppressed by the dominant groups. They boldly reject any form of religion and social system that keep them "in a perpetual state of dehumanization"²². In solidarity with all the marginalised — women, tribals and the landless — they search for an "inclusive sustaining community"²³.

Any future discussion on ecclesiology should seriously take the condition and the demand of dalits.

Footnotes

1. Michael Hollis. *The Significance of South India*, p. 32
2. *Ibid* p, 32
3. *The Church of South India-After Thirty Years*, p. 15
4. Rajaiah D. Paul, *Ecumenism in Action*, p. 100
5. *Ibid*.
6. *The C. S. I. After Thirty Years*, p. 25
7. *Ecumenism in Action*, p. 362
8. *BEM Document*, World Council of Churches, p. 29-30
9. This is the first document that served the basis of negotiations. It is now printed along with the Constitution of C. S. I.
10. *Ecumenism in Action*, p. 44
11. *After Thirty Years*,p.1
12. *After Thirty Years*, p. 49
13. *Ecumenism in Action*, p. 61
14. *The Community of Women and Men in the Church*. A Report of the Consultation p. 98
15. *After Thirty Years*, p. 22
16. *Ibid*. p . 19
17. *After Thirty Years*, p 29
18. *Ibid*. p. 33
19. *Voices*, 153
20. *Ibid.*, 168
21. *Faith Action, Politics: 25th Year Urban Industrial Rural Mission*, published by NCCI-UIRM, 1984, p. 26
22. *Report of World Conference on Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches*.
23. *Ibid*.

The Concept of the Church a Lutheran Perspective

Introduction

It is the concept of the church which is the *articulus stantis et cadentis*, i. e., that which makes Christian faith stand or fall especially in a pluralistic context as in India. An Indian, in general, is not interested in discovering Christ's way of life or in an individual Christian's life. Christ and Christianity are represented by the church in our context to those who are on their way to knowing Christ. There is, therefore, no doubt about the importance of this subject.

The above mentioned theme has been given to me by the Editor with a specific purpose. As he is publishing the concept of the church in a series from different perspectives, he is interested to get one from the lutheran point of view. Therefore, at the outset, I wish to explain what I mean by lutheran. I am an Indian Christian born and brought up in Christian faith according to the lutheran tradition. But for several years in my life I have lived in places where there was no lutheran church. In those places I have never hesitated to attend non-lutheran churches regularly. Apart from these places, even in places where there was a lutheran church, I had participated in Roman Catholic, C. S. I. and other independent churches freely. I have learned theology in lutheran and ecumenical seminaries and taught theology for several years both in ecumenical and lutheran theological colleges. Now I have come to a point not to draw the name of Luther to establish theological views but only to present my lutheran views. Therefore you may not find many quotations from Luther in this paper and yet for all theological purposes you will find that I am basically a lutheran. I agree with Dietrich Bonhoeffer when he wrote:

Kierkegaard said more than a century ago that if Luther were alive then he would have said the exact opposite of what he said in the sixteenth century. I believe he was right *cum grano salis*¹.

This statement is of utmost importance. It points out that it is not necessary to be a lutheran according to words and terminology but it is desirable to be a lutheran in spirit. I strongly believe that words have a killing nature where as the spirit has an enlivening nature (II Cor. 3:6).

Theology or reality – a methodological question

There are two ways or methods in writing the concept of the church.

1. It is possible to write a theology of the church giving its biblical basis. One can write about the theological terminology, viz. Qahal, Ekklesia, Kuriokos etc. and explain the nature of the Call of God to Abraham, His covenant with Israel, the role of the prophets in correcting the misunderstanding of the people of God and God's renewed call in and through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Pentecost day, on the Apostles and others, who went and proclaimed that if any one be in Christ he is a new creation; that Jesus Christ is the corner stone, the bride groom and the Head of the church which correspondingly represents the building, the bride and the body of Christ. We shall see some more aspects of the nature of the church in the next section also.

2. It is also possible, on the other hand, to discuss the concept of the church as it is in reality today in India. In this method one does not trace the historical development of the concept of the church but considers the practical functioning of the church in the present day context analysing the nature and function of the church. For this paper I intend to follow the second way of treating the subject.

Following the second method, I do not make the Word and Sacrament as my section title but write on indigenisation and ecumenism. Today I do not confront the problem whether the Word of God or the tradition is decisive. We have discussed so much about this problem starting with Luther, for the

past nearly five centuries that there is no longer any need to dwell on that point. In fact today the lutheran churches are prone to be more dogmatic than some others.

On the other hand the burning problem with regard to the Word is whether it is totally inspired (verbal inspiration) or it reflects human elements too. Luther did not know about the form-cum-textual criticism about which Albert Schweitzer wrote a summary in his book 'The Quest of the Historical Jesus', delineating the subject from the works of Reimarus to Wrede. Later, Rudolf Bultmann dealt with the problem of "Christ of faith and Christ of history" to that extent that he found very little of the historical Jesus in the Gospels. Barth deliberately neglected this problem since he wanted the Word of God to be the basis of Christian theology. Probably Barth is more lutheran (following Luther's idea) in that respect than Bultmann. But it must be said to the credit of Bultmann that he wanted to be contextual in his country, reinterpreting Luther's doctrine of the Word of God according to the advanced scientific knowledge.

The theology of sacraments (whether two or three or seven) is no longer a bone of contention today because the one church is divided into innumerable pieces and if one church excommunicates a member the other "church" is willing to receive him with all respects and distribute sacraments to him. We know that today excommunication has sometimes become the basis for the birth of a new church; I am talking about the Indian context. The church is losing its ecclesiastical hold on the people. Any one can create a new church today and the *novum* has its own attraction. The most difficult question today is: Which one of the hundreds of churches in India says that it is not preaching the Word correctly and distributing the sacraments rightly inspite of the wide variations in their liturgies and doctrines. If every 'church' has its own teachings and emphases based on the scripture (with their own interpretations), can discussions, dialogues or arguments help us to know the truth?

We no longer quarrel about the visible and invisible nature of the church today as it had been in the time of Luther. We have learned to know that the church is both

visible and invisible, having the Bishop as its head for all practical purposes and Christ as its head for all spiritual purposes. In fact, the protestant churches are realising more and more the importance of keeping the church as 'one body' right here in this world. Disunity is always the symbol of weakness in the context of material power. The NCCI, the WCC etc. are attempts to regain this strength. This is an important aspect especially in a pluralistic context.

In Luther's days the church was compared to a ship and the people were divided into two sections — those who were inside the ship, saved and destined for eternal life and those who were outside the ship destined to perish for ever. But today when one looks at the church in a pluralistic India, it looks like a small hut (compared with the big temples and mosques), that too in fire and there are three groups of people — those who pray ardently that God should put out the fire and those who exploit this situation and those who do not know what to do and thus are indifferent, minding their own business. By fire we mean the problems. Apart from these three groups, a large majority of those who are not in this hut are on-lookers who are very much interested to know what is going to happen to this hut. I hope I do not paint a pessimistic view of the church in India; all my optimistic points of the Indian church is yet to come in the next section.

The church according to some Indians

Before we look at the picture of the church in India let me draw your attention to some of the views expressed by some Indians on the concept of the church. I intend to cite only three examples — one from a non-Christian, another from a Christian and the third from a 'Christian' who does not like to become a member of the church.

Mahatma Gandhi: Gandhiji remained a Hindu till the end of his life. But this does not mean that he was not attracted to Christ. There are enough references from his writings which prove that he was attracted by the Sermon on the Mount, and was captured by the song — 'When I survey the wondrous cross', — and had read the Bible. His methods of ahimsa amply testify his close proximity to Jesus' teachings on the Mount. There is no doubt that Gandhi was attracted by Jesus Christ.

In fact he confessed accepting Christ's teachings though explicitly rejecting the invitation of the church. May be he could not forget his experiences in South Africa till the end of his life! His argument was that the church did not live up to Christ's teachings and thus there is no real relationship between Christ and the Church. One can interpret Gandhi's stand in different ways ranging from one extremity that Gandhi was a Christian at heart to another extremity that Gandhi's positive statements of Christ was only to placate the British ruling our country at that time. Let us not judge Gandhi's inner motive but learn one fact that Gandhi liked Christ's teachings but rejected the church. Gandhi is not the only person under this category. We can cite scores of famous Hindus and probably thousands whom we do not know through writings or in person. It is claimed that several thousands of non-baptised believers live in Madras. Rajaram Mohan Roy also can be cited under this group.

Chenchiah: Pandipeddi Chenchiah was the chief justice at Pudukkottah. He became a Christian when he was a young man. Pursuing his work in the court, he has written several articles and made a memorable contribution in the International Missionary Council held at Tambaram in 1938. He remained a member of the church till the end of his life. I give below some quotations which bring out his opinion about the church:

We know the church, its history and achievements. Even the eye of faith may not see the resemblance between the church and the kingdom..... The church has always been an organisation. The Kingdom of God was intended to inaugurate a new order of existence, while the church at best reflects ordinary human nature in its heroic and living moods and, at its worst, the tiger and the leopard in man. In the church we miss the grand cosmic sweep of the Kingdom of God, the prolific plenitude of new life.....

If the Indian church has any preappointed task, it is to recover the Kingdom of God as a vital term of Christianity².

Many regular church members can be included in this category.

Subba Rao: Born a Hindu, Subba Rao became a Christian through what he calls a personal revelation of Christ. After this new experience he began preaching Christ and healing the sick. But he did not want to be baptised in a Christian church as he thought that sacraments are not more valuable than a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. He claims that he talks with Jesus often and hence need not read the Bible which is God's word spoken (c. a.) two thousand years ago. He has the following to say about the church:

Dear Padri, We are at our wits' end to understand the curious lives of your tribe. You have made religion a fashionable thing. Change of names, taking of oaths, daily prayers, Sunday gatherings, putting on attractive garb, observing festivals and several such things you do, except what the Lord preached and practised. What the Lord said and did is made into a religion and transformed into a department. Decrying other religions is your religion.

If all your books, your grand religions, your long laborious prayers, your thunderous sermons, your showy baptisms and all your customary gymnastics can't uplift your soul and can only be millstones round your neck, don't you realize that all of them are quite useless and even harmful?

When the Lord Jesus asked John to follow him, why did he not say, 'Wait Lord, first of all let me go to a Padri and get myself plunged in water'?... Straight away he followed the Lord, leaving on the spot every worldly thing, but he did not go to you, Padri, as you say, to be baptised.... Why don't you search for John and hunt him down in whatever world he may be now, catch him by his neck, dip him in your bucket and throw him headlong in your deep pit of Religion³.

Manilal Parelch also belongs to this Hindu-Christian group.

Recently I heard the testimony of a couple who live near Bangalore. They were orthodox Hindus. Due to their wealth and political supremacy, they became enemies to a group who brought them under the influence of witchcraft. The lady suffered beyond any measure and finally got completely cured through an independent preacher. Hardly a day

after the healing, the preacher died and the couple were left alone. They were like spiritual orphans. They got baptised later on. But before that many denominations tried their best to draw them to their own church; the ordeal had become so menacing to them that they decided to keep themselves away from joining any particular church. Thus there are innumerable believers in India who do not join the church but are Christians at heart. There is no doubt that Christ is at work among the people of India and miraculous events are happening everyday. These events happen not necessarily through one denomination or one person but through each and every believer who has a desire to help others and acts courageously for the sake of Christ.

Having looked into a few persons' opinions about the church, let us have a bird's eye-view of the general background in which the Indian churches are set today. All of the Indian churches come out of a historical background.

History of the Indian Church

There are two stages in the birth of the Indian Church. In the first stage, the seed of the Gospel was brought from abroad and sown in a particular area and remained in that area for a long period of fourteen centuries. Somehow or other it lay confined within that area; the missionary zeal was almost limited to the same group.

The question whether St. Thomas brought the Gospel of Christ to India or not has become a difficult problem for church historians. Some would like to hold to the traditions; others demand a historical proof. The burden of proof lies less on those who accept traditions in the Indian context but more on those historians who need to explain how Christians were found in India as early as the middle of the third century, which is historically proved.

In the second stage, the Gospel was brought by Westerners who had a zeal to proclaim the Gospel and make the church a missionary movement. The Scripture was translated into local languages and natives were employed in the missionary tasks. The Gospel was spread to the nook and corner of the land and a majority of the people who were oppressed by the then society specially through the caste system felt that they have

a new atmosphere where they are accepted as people and hence embraced Christianity. The caste distinctions lay underground till the British ruled India but began raising its monstrous head once the power was transferred into the hands of the nationals. Of course caste distinctions were present during the British period but Indians could keep it only within themselves and not openly act in the church strategies because the main decisions were taken by non-nationals who did not give weight to caste problems. They thought that caste differences would wane in due course of time.

Now, after the British had left and the church accepted democratic method for its rule, naturally it is the number of votes that count. Thus some of the churches in India came under the influence and power of the so called 'oppressed' groups. However it took some time for them to establish their rule. The church in India is looking forward to a new age when the once oppressed people would establish justice and peace and thus usher in the kingdom of God more effectively than their 'once oppressors'. In all these changes we see the hand of God leading the church in India. Today there are some who contend that caste practices among christians have been the main cause for the decline of Christendom in India⁴.

The birth of the church in India is unique in some respects. In the first stage it remained more a local group than a missionary church. In the second stage, before the gospel was preached, the doctrines were promulgated to the people. The converts came to the knowledge of Christ through different denominational (Anglican, Lutheran, Baptist etc.) garb or colouring with which Christ was presented to them. In some respects, therefore, one could say that in this second stage the church was born as an adult and not as a child. Chenchiah is right when he says that the task of the present day church is to go back to the "raw fact of Christ". The general principle of the Church in India specially during the slavery period (c. a. 1000-1947 A. D.) was one of accommodation. The post independent period is marked by a self-identity crisis both in the ecclesiastical and social levels. Such a crisis has hampered naturally the growth of the ecumenical movement. The direction for ecumenism lies almost on the opposite

side of the direction to self-identity crisis; the former is an action based on clear knowledge of and grounding in one's identity for which the latter is a search.

Joys and sorrows of the Indian Church

Compared to many churches in other parts of the world, the Indian church is *sui generis* in many respects. Its historical and pluralistic context contributes to its special situation. Let us analyse three special aspects that have a bearing on the Indian church today, viz. its prophetic role, its bent-in nature and its ecumenical involvement.

Prophetic role of the Indian Church: Whether we like it or not the Indian church has a prophetic role to play in the social, economic and developmental spheres. At the same time we cannot be complacent about the achievements because the church has to go a long way to realise the desired results.

The Indian church is a suffering church; thus it is qualified to be a prophetic church. Usually the prophets, in comparison to the priests of the Old Testament, are known for their suffering nature. Prophets like Samuel, Elijah, Amos and Jeremiah were prepared to meet the worst. They were thrown into prison or well, beaten, degraded and persecuted. If the concept of the church is still correlated to the concept of the people of God, the new Israel is not only a kingdom of priests (I Pet. 2:9) but a community of prophets too. The Indian Christian community knows the price it has to pay for becoming a member of the church. It loses scholarships, concessions, privileges and job opportunities in order to gain Christ. The problem takes a serious turn when a group of economically backward people want to embrace Christianity. The church has a guilty feeling when it baptises such people. It confronts a question whether it is pushing the economically poor people still backward in the name and for the sake of spirituality. For this sake, the church is suffering because it has to reject certain persons who do not openly claim to be Christians though in their heart and also in tradition they worship Christ. They are nick-named as 'non-baptised believers'.

Recently Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute conducted a study programme on such

non-baptised believers. According to the available statistics, there is almost an equal number of non-baptised believers as there are Christians in the city of Madras. A book with the title *Churchless Christianity* is in the press, which gives full details about these hidden Christians. What does the church do for these "believers"? By rejecting them, are we in any way helping them or building the church or obeying Christ's command of love? Even if we cannot accept them straightway into the Lord's Table, is it not possible for the church to help them in any other way? The Indian church has not yet taken up this subject for discussion or decision. So, on the one hand, the Indian church is suffering because of its socio-political context and on the other hand it has forgotten its prophetic role in broadening the horizon for others to receive God's grace. Do we not read in the scriptures how Amos and Isaiah broke down the narrow walls of Israel's nationalism and presented the universal God concept? Later the church threw away the legal rites (circumcision, Sabbath etc.) to keep the door open for gentiles to enter in. In the church history, we know the actions taken by the church against those who denied their faith during persecutions. Let us remind ourselves of the Donatist controversy. They are developments in the process of God's dealing with His people.

The prophet usually brought a new message from God and said 'Thus says the Lord'. The principle of reformation is included in the prophets' life and actions. The suffering Indian church cannot forget its prophetic/reformatory role in any stage of its growth and whenever it faces a new problem. Only the missionary aspect of the church can redeem it from its institutional character. The institutional character of the church will not be counted as sinful provided the missionary aspect is not absent.

Bonhoeffer, usually called the prophet of the twentieth century, emphasised that the church should be a 'church for others'. Our own country has not forgotten the social philanthropy of the church especially in the fields of education, medical help and developmental projects for the poor. But this glory is fading into the past. Today we have to think and

plan more intensively how we can live as a 'church for others'. Through new developmental programmes like building homes for the aged and taking good care of the old people.

A church for others: There is something intrinsic in the Indian history and culture, something mystical which makes the Indians build a fence as soon as they invent anything new. Even Christianity in India fell into this safety precaution method in the early centuries of Christendom. Later on, the same tendency can be seen when churches formed their own compound walls, which exposes a tendency 'to be bent within itself', what we can otherwise call *incurvalus in se*⁵.

The members of the church are called to be the 'salt of the earth' and 'light of the world'. Its meaning is that they are supposed to be distributed everywhere and not to be found in one place.

Indian church history is not bereft of events when Christians got themselves involved in social problems and tried to establish justice in that situation. This involvement proves the Indian church's attempt to get out of the 'bent in' position. This attempt can be definitely appreciated. However the non-Christians would like the Christians first to prove their patriotism before involving in social reformations. So, only where Christians have established their real interest in nation building, they become eligible to enter into struggles for social justice. Unfortunately some Christians want to establish social justice before proving their real interest in the nation. We live in a secular/non-Christian world and hence our love for the nation must be proved first before questioning the justice of the land. It is quite understandable that Shri C. Rajagopalachari advised Bishop A. J. Appasamy and all Christians not to get involved in problems of social justice but first to confine themselves to doing social service⁶. It is true that Indian Christians, having passed through the struggle for independence with modest contribution⁷, should first prove their patriotism on a wider level.

The church is called to leave their ghettos to bring peace in the strife torn societies in India. Let us ask ourselves what the church in India has done in the Bodo unrest, or in Punjab, or in Sri Lankan ethnic struggle. Should

the church ever be concerned only to protect the rights and privileges of Christians or be willing to sacrifice its own rights and fight for the rights of others? First the church will have to forego its rights and then fight for others' cause and only then can the church take up social justice in the Indian context.

The 'curved in' church is bothered more to protect its property, increase the socio-political privileges of its members and thus build a strong fort round itself. Thereby more struggle is created within itself as experienced by Chenchiah. But an open church lives for others as Bonhoeffer has envisaged. The word curve is synonymous with the word comma which in turn is correlated with the term 'coma'. The man in a coma stage cannot live for others but has to strive for his own existence. Let us find out whether the church can establish its national interest in the field of education or in the field of medical treatment or lately in finding a solution to the drug and alcoholic problems or in some other effort so that the nation can unequivocally give credit to the church for its philanthropy. The aim of such an analysis need not be outward recognition but an inward perusal. A prophetic reformatory, suffering church which is basically missionary in character cannot afford to be a church *incurvatus in se*.

An ecumenical church: From a biblical/theological perspective every one accepts that there is and that there can be only one church; but on the reality level we see each denomination claiming itself to be the true church and even taking up instruments of warfare against another denomination. Of course such an antagonism within the church prevailed even during St. Paul's time which made him write that the church is the Body of Christ and it is not expedient for one member of the body to fight against another member (I Cor. 12). The third world is the worst affected area where this strife between members of one body or one family is at its worst. Sometimes this infight acquires economic and political input. If only the Indian Christians were not in a pluralistic context, they could afford to prove the strength of their dogma or argument. The pluralistic context of the third world demands an immediate call to recognise the spiritual unity of all the members of the Body of Christ. Very often in my evangelistic pro-

gramme, I have been confronted by non-Christians with the question: which is the true church? Whether that question comes from a sincere heart or not, the problem posed cannot be considered less serious.

What do the people say about ecumenism? Naturally non-Christians will consider it easier to understand Christianity if the church is one. Among the Christians, those who occupy important posts generally advocate unity in diversity. More interestingly, the western missions and mission boards who have introduced denominational identity, are the ones who strongly advocate church union now at every sphere of the church's work. Certainly much unity has been achieved in theological training. There are several theological colleges in India that are ecumenical. Even colleges which bear denominational nomenclature throw their gates open to all the members who belong to the Body of Christ.

Unfortunately theologians have not put their heart and soul in the problem of ecumenism in India because they are preoccupied with other problems in the area of mission, indigenisation etc. The need of the hour today is to help the common man — both non-Christian and Christian — at the grass-root level so that they may not run from pillar to post but see the tree for the wood. Since the principle of comity is not totally kept, there is more difficulty in maintaining discipline in the church.

Church union efforts were quite successful immediately after the independence of the nation. But slowly it is marred by red-tapism and has slowed down very much. Today we hear a lot about dialogue between different churches: they try to make headway towards church unity. However it must be pointed out that of the three levels in church union, viz. organic, federal and spiritual, the order of priority plays an important role. Any attempt to form organic union without passing through federal and spiritual unions will not yield good fruit. We must strive in such a way that a spiritual unity be attained first, then a federal or conciliar unity be attained and then only organic unity be attempted. Of course each stage may take a long time. But the order should be clear; only after laying the foundation can one put up a building, not vice versa.

It is better to detach material implications in church union talks during the first stage. Dr. K. Rajaratnam, an expert in the field of economics and a leader in ecclesiastical matters, cautions all negotiators of church unity not to put the cart before the horse, i.e., not to think of economical implications before achieving a real unity, in other words, before the hands cooperate with each other, the heart must be one.

If one does not want ecumenism because the other church is not willing to share its wealth or property then our ecumenism is attached to strings that pull from behind. Why is it not possible for us to have church union without the sharing of wealth? Though two brothers may live — one in a very high society and another in poor surroundings — are they not brothers born to the same parents? Neither wealth nor doctrines nor power (spiritual or material) can separate the Christians in India from one another, for they all have the same Father, the same Lord Jesus Christ and the same Spirit who guides them all today.

The church is only an instrument to guide us to salvation; it is not a guarantee for any one. Salvation is not to be identified with the church, far from speaking about any denomination; but salvation is to be identified only with God. 'God is our salvation' is an oft repeated statement in the Bible. So salvation is not to be connected even with our confession, faith or works. These are all human endeavours. Salvation rests squarely upon God's saving love expressed in Jesus Christ, His Son. The church is only a place where the saved ones meet. The church is not an agent of salvation. With baptism we become members of the church but it is God who leads us to baptism⁸.

Conclusion

Two factors have received more attention in this article — unity and service⁹. Unity within the church and service for others. There are other factors which deserve our attention too, e.g. biblical/theological perspective of the church, problem of indigenisation, evangelical vs liberal views etc. We

can be content with the above mentioned two factors for the time being because they need our attention immediately and other problems may automatically be solved if these two factors are well understood. A united church can serve others better than a divided church. Thus unity is needed for service and service must be the outcome of unity.

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Footnotes

1. Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 31
2. D. A. Thangasamy, *The Theology of Chenchiah*, p. 139ff.
3. K. Baago, *The Movement around Subba Rao*, p. 9f.
4. Cf. C. P. Thangaraj's article on 'The Decline of Christendom in India?' in the *Gurukul Perspective*, 33, July to Sept. 1988.
5. Luther himself accuses the church for its 'bent in' nature which he delineates to the Hebrew word *avon* which means 'crookedness'. In fact Luther has taken this idea from St. Augustine. LW, Vol. 25. p. 292.
cf. also A. Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, p. 485 et. passim.,
6. A. J. Appasamy, *The Christian Task in Independent India*, p. 4.
7. George Thomas, *Christian Indians & Indian Nationalism, 1885-1950*
8. Cf. Explanation given to the third article of the Apostles creed in Luther's Small Catechism.
9. Cf. D. W. Jesudoss, *What is Man?*, pp. 146ff.

Catholic Ecclesiology and the Challenges It Faces Today

What does the Church believe that it is? Who founded the Church and what is its origin, nature and mission? How did the systems, beliefs, rituals, structures and organization of the Church develop in history through the centuries? What is the life-style of the Christian community? What is the relationship of the Church to the other communities, to the other religions and to the world at large? How should the Church understand and fulfil its mission today? If we try to answer these and similar questions, we may develop a theology of the Church or ecclesiology.

In one word, ecclesiology is the articulation of the self-understanding of the Church. But this self-understanding of the Church is historically and culturally conditioned. Christianity born in the family of Judaism, naturally understood itself as an offshoot of Judaism, and appropriated much of the Hebrew culture and traditions. The Church understood itself as the new "people of God" (*laos*), the new and true Israel, and the people of the "New Covenant". But when Christianity crossed the borders of the Hebrew world and met other peoples and cultures like the Greeks, the Romans, the Germanic tribes, it began to dissociate itself from Judaism and to understand itself in new ways and categories. Sometimes the new ways in understanding the Church also led to conflicts and tragic divisions in the Church and radically different ecclesiologies, such as Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant, gradually emerged. For several centuries these different ecclesiologies never met each other, but lived in isolation and opposition that each of these ecclesiologies became to some extent fragmented, exaggerated and distorted. But today in the Ecumenical Movement the different Churches and their

ecclesiologies began to meet and challenge one another in dialogue and there is a tremendous possibility of their positively relating to, and learning from, one another for their mutual correction and enrichment.

In the following pages we shall briefly outline the historical development and growth of Catholic ecclesiology during the past two millennia and the challenges it faces today from the ecclesiologies of other Churches and from the contemporary world at large.

I

Development of Catholic Ecclesiology

The New Testament does not give us an explicit, systematic and well-articulated ecclesiology because its central theme was not the Church but Jesus, his words and deeds, especially his message of the Kingdom of God. It is Matthew who gives us some details about the life of the early Christian community (Mt 18:1-20). It was a community of the "little ones", a fellowship of brothers and sisters where Jesus alone was the Lord or Master. But he himself came not "to be served but to serve". He came in search of sinners, "the lost sheep". Leadership in the community was the leadership in service. It is Christ's living and dynamic presence which makes the Church what it is. When two or three are gathered in his name, he is in their midst. Acts of the Apostles also speaks about the unifying elements of the early Christian community: the teaching of the Apostles, fellowship, the breaking of the bread and prayer (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35; 5: 2-15). These early Christian communities, held together by the teachings of Jesus and that of the apostles into one fellowship which they celebrated the breaking of the one bread, were signs of the Kingdom of God which Jesus proclaimed. The blind saw, the lame walked, the deaf heard, the lepers were healed, the possessed were made free; the sinners, tax-collectors and prostitutes were converted; and all of them together formed a community, the Kingdom community and started a new movement, the Jesus movement.

This movement was first confined to Israel, and the new community understood itself in terms of the fulfilment

of the promises given to Israel. The Jewish Christian community situated itself within Judaism and emphasized its continuity with Israel. But when other groups like the Hellenists and the Gentiles came into the Church they began to dissociate themselves from Judaism and to emphasize their discontinuity with Israel. The controversy over circumcision, the council of Jerusalem, and the persecution of Stephen and other leaders of the Hellenistic Christians could be seen as a confrontation between Jewish Christians and Hellenistic/Gentile Christians. The decision of the Jerusalem council (Acts 15) was to allow a healthy pluralism in the Church that there could be different types of Churches marked by a rich diversity in life-style, customs, worship, discipline, pattern of ministry, administration and organization, but all united in the fundamental Christian faith. So the different local Churches in the Apostolic and post-Apostolic period were not the carbon copies of the Jewish Church of Jerusalem, but were of different types conditioned by the society and culture of the people. Nor was there a central administration for all the Churches. Each local/regional church was autonomous and autocephalous within the fundamental unity of Christian faith, enshrined in the common Scriptures and the Apostolic tradition. Whenever there arose common problems or tensions and conflicts among the Churches on matters of faith, leaders of the different Churches met together in synods and councils and took common decisions. The early Churches thus had a synodal and conciliar structure. The one Church was a communion of different Churches.

By the end of the New Testament period and at the beginning of the second century we see a homogeneous development in the forms and patterns of the ordained ministry in all the Churches. The earliest Jewish Churches adopted the Jewish patterns of ministry, administration and organization of the community with the system of Sanhedrin — the Council of presbyters or elders who supervised the life and work of the community. Whereas the Hellenistic and Gentile Churches under the leadership of Paul followed a charismatic and spontaneous system of ministry and administration. Those who manifested charisms were accepted to be leaders and ministers. With the death of Paul and other apostles we see that the

overall leadership in the community was assigned to the *episcopoi* (supervisors) who were recognised as the authoritative successors of the Apostles. But they administered matters of the community with a council of presbyters. The deacons took up the role of the administration of temporal matters and gradually became assistants at the liturgical services. Thus the threefold pattern of the ordained ministry consisting of bishops, presbyters and deacons gradually emerged, and it was adopted by all the Churches as it helped the unity, continuity and order in the historical context of the increasing heresies and schisms in the churches. This threefold pattern of ministry later on became normative as the only valid pattern until the time of the Protestant Reformation.

In the homogeneous development of the threefold ordained ministry one might also see the influence of Jewish sacerdotalism and its threefold hierarchical structure of Highpriests, Priests and Levites or temple assistants. Although the New Testament does not mention "priests" in the Christian community, but only "presbyters" or "elders", in the course of time when Christianity fully emerged as a separate religion there happened also an evolution within it towards sacerdotalism by which the presbyters became "priests" and bishops were seen as "high priests", and the deacons became mere liturgical assistants. This development of sacerdotalism was also one of the root causes of clericalism in the Church with the result that members of the Church were divided into two separate classes — the clergy and the laity. May be, the division of the Roman Society into two main classes — the nobles and the commons — might have been also a historical factor in perpetuating clericalism in the Church.

The conversion of the Roman emperor Constantine to Christianity and the subsequent identification between the Church and the State was perhaps the most influential factor in the development of ecclesiology. Christianity became the official religion of the whole empire. Other religious cults were prohibited and by political force the entire people were invited to become christians. Political power was also used to suppress all heresies and schisms in the Church, and uniformity in dogmas and doctrines was insisted upon by the ecumenical

councils of the 4th and 5th centuries, often convened by the emperors. By copying the political and imperial model the Church also gradually developed a kind of monarchical episcopacy which was quite contrary to the New Testament vision of authority in the Church and its charismatic and communal structures.

The administrative units and structures of the empire were copied by the church. The monarchical bishops became heads of territorial units called "dioceses", which were the administrative units of the empire. Pastors of communities thus became rulers of territories, and "pastoral ministry" became episcopal "jurisdiction", a term from the Roman Law which meant 'the power of governing'. The dioceses came to be known after the name of the city where a bishop resided. The bishops who occupied the provincial capitals were called metropolitans (metropolis = mother city) who naturally exercised some authority over the surrounding dioceses. Whenever common problems emerged, provincial councils were held under their leadership. And it was from this structural evolution that the patriarchal system gradually developed by the 5th century. The metropolitans of the major cities like Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem and Constantinople exercised greater authority over larger territories and they were called Patriarchates, headed by Patriarchs, under whom many Metropolitan sees and churches were clubbed together. Thus several ecclesial families or rites or individual churches were gradually formed, marked by their specific liturgies, disciplines, and theological as well as spiritual heritage. In the first millennium the Universal Church was thus governed by a Pentarchy, i.e., by the five patriarchs who were all equals, though the patriarch of Rome was the first among the equals (*primus inter pares*). The communion among the patriarchal churches was expressed and maintained by the exchange of "synodal letters", by mutual visits and intercommunion. The election of the bishops had to be confirmed by the metropolitan and that of the metropolitan by the patriarch and that of the patriarch by the other patriarchs, especially by the patriarch of Rome who was the first among the patriarchs.

Although the Bishop of Rome played a key role in the communion of the churches in the first millennium, the growth

of the papacy and the emergent papal primacy was an ecclesiological development of the second millennium. As the capital of the empire Rome was the centre of the western world and it became the centre of the Church too when it became very much identified with the state. Moreover the church of Rome enjoyed a special doctrinal authority as it was founded by the chief apostles Peter and Paul. In the second century Irenaeus of Lyons in Gaul asked all the churches to check their teaching with the tradition and teaching of Peter and Paul given to the church of Rome which is the guardian and witness to the authentic apostolic tradition. In the third century the bishops of Rome began for the first time to assert their prerogative as "successors of Peter" by referring to Mt. 16:18: "So I now say to you; You are Peter and on this rock I will build my church." It was bishop Leo I of Rome (5th century) who for the first time took the title "Vicar of Peter" and systematically taught that the bishop of Rome had authority over all the churches. But it was challenged by the Eastern churches which never acknowledged any authority to the bishops of Rome to interfere in their own church affairs. Rome's domain of influence was greatly enlarged during the 6th, 7th and 8th centuries due to the conversion of nations of western Europe by the missionaries sent by Rome, which fact was conducive to their being brought under it. In 800 A.D. the Frankish King, Charles the Great, was crowned Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire by Pope Leo IX. This alliance between the spiritual and temporal powers, in fact, paved way to the pope's supremacy over temporal authority. It also enhanced the political power of the popes who practically became kings of central Italy.

Although papacy began to assert itself by the end of the first millennium its authority was actually exercised and implemented in the other churches only during the beginning of the second millennium by means of the Gregorian Reform, by the codification of Canon Law and by the Scholastic theology. Through the Gregorian Reform introduced by Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085) papal primacy or universal jurisdiction was theologically elaborated and practically implemented. The bishop of Rome became the Universal Bishop, head of the Universal Church, who claimed authority to

appoint or depose or transfer bishops in any part of the world. He also claimed to have authority even to depose kings and emperors. Pope Gregory taught that the Roman Church had never fallen into error nor would ever. The Pope became the sole law-giver in the universal church and the whole canon law was codified during this period in this climate of the supremacy and sovereignty of the papacy. Thus papal primacy was thus legally established. It reached its climax during the 12th and 13th centuries, which also was the golden period of Scholasticism. The scholastic theologians like Bonaventure, Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas were the great supporters and theoreticians of the monarchical conception of the Church. For them Pope was "the vicar of Christ", "the visible Christ", who has "the plenitude of power" in the church so that his authority is absolute in matters of both jurisdiction and doctrine. In their teachings we find the beginnings of the doctrine of papal infallibility.

Many of these scholastic theologians in fact worked within the system and categories of Platonic and neo-Platonic philosophy which explained the relationship between the absolute and the world through a system of intermediaries and the concept of a 'hierarchy of beings'. They understood and explained the church as a "pyramid" at the apex of which was the Pope as Vicar of Christ, in whom the whole authority was concentrated. Those who are on the lower rungs of this hierarchical structure received authority from those above them, thus bishops from the pope and priests from bishops. The laity remained at the bottom of this ecclesial pyramid and they just passively received everything from above. Their only way to Christ and God was through the mediation of priests, bishops and ultimately the pope. Cardinal Robert Bellarmine was the champion of this pyramidal ecclesiology which became the official Roman Catholic ecclesiology until Vatican II. Against the reformers of the 16th century who minimised the visible and institutional aspects of the Church, Bellarmine overemphasized its visibility and tangibility so that the Church appear to be primarily a visible and hierarchical institution with clearly defined structures, rules and membership, almost eclipsing the very mystery of the Church.

The institutionalization and centralization of the Catholic church was consolidated by the net-work of papal legates in each country who executed the directives of Rome in each Church and reported back. The setting up of a powerful curial administration in Rome, the system of the college of cardinals who elect the pope and supervise the work of the Roman Congregations, the insistence on the *ad limina* visits and reports of all bishops to the Pope, the undermining of the ancient patriarchal system by erecting parallel patriarchates and the curtailing of the power of Archbishop-primates in different countries, all these enhanced the power and prestige of the Roman Papacy and consolidated the pyramidal ecclesiology. The centrifugal forces of the 16th century reformation and that of the secular, liberal and revolutionary movements of the 19th century were checked successfully by the counter-reformation of the council of Trent and by the definition of the Vatican I on the papal Primacy and Infallibility which was the culmination of a historical development.

The historical development of this over centralization of the Church had to pay its price. The rich diversity among the various Churches was suspected and at times condemned with the tragic consequence of division in the church. The Christological controversies among the different theologians and theological schools in the 5th century led to the separation of the Oriental Orthodox Churches centred around Antioch and Alexandria. Undue interference of the Bishop of Rome into the affairs of the Orthodox Churches caused the division between East and West in the 11th century. Unwillingness to reform the Church and hasty condemnation of the Reformers in the 16th century was the root-cause of the division between Catholics and Protestants. The divisions among the Churches and their subsequent life in separation, isolation and opposition naturally led to certain fragmentation, distortion and exaggeration in all the Churches without exception. The assertion of the primacy of Rome over the other Churches practically destroyed the legitimate autonomy and identity of the other Churches, and the concept of the Catholic Church as a communion of the different local/regional/national/individual Churches fell into oblivion. The rise of sacerdotalism, clericalization

and the pyramidal ecclesiology simply reduced the laity, the 99% of the Church, to mere spectators and observers in the Church without having any involvement or mission in the Church.

II

Vatican II and Changes in Catholic Ecclesiology

The Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution on Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes* 4-5) spoke about the radical changes in the world today and called for an explicit and conscious restatement of the self-understanding of the Church in the actual situation of today. The most radical change is that we have passed from a static concept of reality to a dynamic and evolutionary concept. It is a radical shift from the Aristotelian-Thomistic doctrinal approach to a historical and processive approach to reality which calls for a new understanding of the Church, away from an absolute and dogmatic Church to a contingent and historically conditioned Church. The mystery of the Church always takes concrete historical form in the particular socio-cultural and political world. The shift from the imperial, feudalistic, colonialistic and dictatorial regimes and such social systems to a democratic, egalitarian and free society required new structures and patterns of administration and leadership in the Church. Emergence of the newly independent nations and the new consciousness of their cultural and political identity called for the inculturation and legitimate autonomy of the local and national Churches. The new pluralism, religious, ecclesial, doctrinal and theological, offered a new concept of unity in plurality, and invited the various Churches and religions to fellowship. The modern ecumenical movement, both inter-Church and inter-religious, certainly forced the Catholic Church to revise its self-understanding. The new theological distinction between the Church and the Kingdom of God called for a kingdom-centred mission rather than a Church-centred one. In the light of all these radical changes and challenges, the Second Vatican Council took a bold initiative to develop a new ecclesiology.

The most significant contribution of the Council is

perhaps the rediscovery of the mystery of the Church, a re-discovery of the Biblical and Patriotic spirit which never dared to define the Church. The medieval theologians, on the other hand, made the Church into a perfect society and visible institution with clear-cut definitions, regulations, structures and boundaries that the mystery aspect of the Church was lost to a great extent. The Church should not be seen primarily as a social reality, but it must be seen with the eyes of faith as part of the mission of the Holy Trinity, God's plan of salvation realized in history. The Church is God's sacrament and instrument for the salvation of the whole humanity, for the realization of the Kingdom of God. As in the mystery of Christ divine and human natures are united in the one person, so is the mystery of the Church where it is united to Christ as his own Body. This mystery of the Church is presented in the New Testament by various imageries like the Body of Christ, the People of God, the Bride of Christ, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, the Flock of Christ and so on. Each one of these imageries or models enlighten some particular aspect of the mystery of the Church. No one image or model of the Church is absolute or exhaustive. If we take seriously this mystery aspect of the Church, we will not be so juridical and triumphalistic in defining the boundaries of the Church. The Council infact acknowledged that the mystery of the Church transcends the Catholic Church and is present in the other Churches too though all the Churches may not be faithful to the mystery of Christ in the same way. The mystery of the Church is also necessarily related to the mystery of the Kingdom of God whose sign, sacrament, instrument, agent, servant and herald is the Church. It means that the Kingdom of God and the Church cannot be identified, which calls for a kingdom-oriented ecclesiology, more open and less triumphalistic.

A new understanding of the Church as "the People of God" is another change made by Vatican II. The mystery of the Church takes concrete form in a historical, human community in which and through which the individuals are saved. God's plan of Salvation is the gathering together of humanity into one community or one family, a process initiated in the call of Israel to which a momentum and a new direction was given in Jesus Christ, and in the call of "a new People

of God". Gathering together a new people in the Church is not the end of the Salvation History. It is a means to the end which is the gathering of all people in the Kingdom of God. In other words the Church as the People of God is a sign of the final unity of all humankind in the Kingdom of God.

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church has a full Chapter on the "People of God" and it is significantly placed before the chapter on the hierarchy; for the pope, bishops, priests, religious and laity, they all belong to, and are equal as members of, the People of God. This was the concept and practice of the Church in the New Testament. The Church was a community of brothers and sisters who enjoyed perfect equality and fraternity. Although the members of the community had different charisms and corresponding functions in the community, that did not mean any superiority or inferiority in the community. Although some people exercised an overall leadership in the community, it only meant a call "to serve" the community. The whole authority in the Church was entrusted to the whole community (Mt. 18:15-20), although the apostles and their successors always had a special place in the community; they were the spokespersons and representatives of the community and for the community. But gradually as sacerdotalism, clericalism and the political concept of authority (ruling over and lording it over) began to prevail in the Church, *hierarchy* (= sacred power) of the community was monopolized by the leadership and the community was divided into two groups, often into two classes, hierarchy and the laity. The Council reasserted the dignity and equality of the entire people of God and elaborated their priestly, prophetic and pastoral roles and responsibilities both in the Church and in the world.

The entire people of God is a priestly people. In the Christian community properly speaking there are no 'priests' but only 'ministers' or 'pastors'. Every Christian is a priest in the real sense that he can himself stand before God and address him as Father (*Abba*) without any intermediary. He is entitled to worship God and to actively participate in the celebration of the Sacraments, though some people are specifically called and appointed by the Church for the official

preaching of the Word of God and for the right administration of the Sacraments. This latter "ordained ministry" does not deprive the people of their priestly role of worship and offering of themselves as a spiritual sacrifice. All Christians also exercise the prophetic ministry of Christ and that of the Church and its basis is the gift of the Holy Spirit given to them and the different charisms of the Spirit. It challenges the authoritarianism of the hierarchy of the Church who claim to be the exclusive channel of the working of the Spirit. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit is residing in the community of Christians as a whole and their sense of faith (*sensus fidei*) is the real basis for the infallibility of the Church (*Lumen Gentium*, No. 12). In fact, when the Pope or the Ecumenical Council define a matter of faith, they do only witness to the faith of the Christian community and articulate that faith in the name of the community. This prophetic quality and role of the entire People of God demands a critical look at the traditional teaching on the *magisterium* and its practical exercise.

The Council's inclusive concept of the People of God is another major change which calls for a more 'open Church' with the whole humanity as her own children (*Lumen Gentium*, Nos. 13-16). Catholics, non-catholic Christians, those who belong to the other religions, those without religion but who live according to the dictates of their conscience, all are related to the People of God though in varying degrees or levels. This inclusive concept of the People of God, has inspired contemporary theology to seriously examine the relationship of the Catholic Church with the other Churches, other religions and with the entire humanity. As a result new vision of ecumenism and a new theology of other religions are on the horizon.

The rediscovery of the concept of the Church as the People of God has in fact transformed and enriched the Church's life. The laity began to find out their role and mission in the Church. People began to realize that theirs is the Church, that they are the Church. The result is the emergence of the people's Churches and Basic Christian communities and other new models of Churches.

Another change made by Vatican II is its teaching on episcopal collegiality by which the Catholic Church made a radical shift from its papal monarchical system. This is once again a rediscovery of the synodal and conciliar structure and system of the early Churches. The first major controversy in the Church on the admission of the Gentiles to the Church and the question whether they be circumscised like the Jewish Christians was solved not from above by a decree or decision of Peter, but by common discussion and deliberation in a council where all the apostles and the elders of the different Churches met together. The meeting of Provincial Synods and Councils of the neighbouring Churches, whenever they faced common problems and issues, was a custom and practice during the second and third centuries, and the fourth and fifth centuries witnessed to the great ecumenical Councils which met to deliberate on the Trinitarian and Christological controversies of the period. The ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325 AD) stipulated that Provincial Councils should be held twice a year and thus in the East the Synodal system became a constitutive part of the Church. In the patriarchate of Rome also the bishop of Rome had a Council of presbyters, consisting of bishops, priests and deacons, which was later turned to be the consistory or the College of Cardinals. But as the Papal Primacy was asserted and the centralization of the Churches took place during the beginning of the second millennium, the provincial Synods and Councils became superfluous as they were totally controlled by Rome. The administrative reforms made by the Council of Trent in establishing the different Roman Congregations to supervise and co-ordinate the work of all the Churches totally eclipsed the conciliar and synodal system and practice that we could find an ecumenical council only after 300 years in Vatican I which once again by the definition of papal primacy and infallibility practically ruled out the need of ecumenical councils. The Pope could decide and define any matter by the power of his infallibility without consulting bishops or convening a council. It was the Second Vatican Council which rediscovered and revived the synodal and conciliar principles in the Church by its teaching on episcopal collegiality, by the institution of the permanent Roman Synod, by the organization and effective functioning

of the National and Regional episcopal conferences, by the diocesan pastoral councils etc. But the Council could not perhaps fully pull down the old pyramidal structures and the monarchical and dictatorial ways of functioning in the Church. And, in fact, there is an overall feeling in the Church that Rome is today functioning once again in a pre-conciliar fashion.

What is this new teaching of episcopal collegiality? Its basis is the dignity and co-responsibility of the bishops as the successors of the Apostles, that their authority comes from the apostles through the sacrament of episcopal ordination. The authority of the bishop is derived not from the Pope as in the pyramidal ecclesiology of the scholastics. The Bishops are no more seen as the executives or delegates of the Roman pontiff. As the Apostles worked as a team or college, to which was entrusted the whole authority in the Church (not contrary to the authority of the whole community, but as spokesmen of the community as well as representatives of Christ) and as Peter was the head of this Apostolic college, so also the bishops today, as successors of the apostles, form a college, the episcopal college, with pope as its head. This episcopal college has the supreme, universal and immediate authority in the Church and it could teach and define matters of faith and morals with infallibility. Naturally it has an apparent conflict with the papal primacy and infallibility as defined by the first Vatican Council. How could there be two absolute and infallible authorities in the one Church? Theologians try to solve this conflict and tension by pointing out that there could be no college without its head who is the pope and the pope when he speaks as the head of the Universal Church should voice the mind of the whole church and that of the episcopal college. It is the Church which is infallible and there are two ways of exercising this infallibility, either by the pope in his primacy or by the episcopal college. But those who really know what happened at the first Vatican Council would tell us that according to that definition the pope was not juridically bound to consult the bishops or the episcopal college before making any definitive teaching. It is the theological task of the coming years that the relationship between Papal Primacy and Episcopal Collegiality be properly understood and explained.

I shall conclude this section by mentioning one more radical change in the ecclesiology of the Council, and this is perhaps the most significant one, and it is connected with the episcopal collegiality. As the successors of the apostles the bishops are not only co-responsible for all the Churches, but they are also independent and immediate heads of their local Churches. Each bishop is not the successor of one of the apostles but a successor of the twelve apostles and as such he is the head of the local church, the principle of its unity, and his local church is not under any other church. His local church is the concrete embodiment of the Universal Church and it is not a mere part or an administrative unit of the Universal Church. The Universal Church is fully present in the local Church; the local church is the microcosm of the whole church; the local church is the real church in its original. These local churches are autonomous to a great extent and also could be diverse, enjoying their own discipline, their own liturgical practice, their own theological and spiritual heritage. The unity among these diverse local churches is their unity in faith and sacramental communion. They are catholic by their communion with one another expressed in the communion of their bishops in the episcopal college with its head the Roman Pontiff (*Lumen Gentium* 23, 26). The Catholic Church is thus the communion of the many local churches which may be either the different Patriarchal Churches or Individual Churches or even the so-called dioceses. These different churches have equal dignity and they are called "Sister Churches". So the emphasis today is from one Church to many Churches, which gives a new vision of unity — unity not as monolithic or uniform, but as "unity in diversity".

The concept of the "one church in many churches" has a tremendous potential for ecumenism or unity among the different Christian denominations. If unity is to be sought not in uniformity and amalgamation, but in faith and sacramental communion, leaving a rich diversity of Churches or ecclesial types, we could solve the greatest obstacle to Christian Unity.

III

Challenges to Catholic Ecclesiology Today

The Challenges to the Catholic ecclesiology today come from various quarters and sources. The other Churches and their ecclesiologies have been constantly questioning the self-understanding of the Roman Catholic Church which considered most of the other Churches as "partial", having only "some ecclesial elements", not fully "Churches" due to their historical deviations, defectiveness and irregularities. A special phenomenon of our time is the ecumenical movement where the different Churches are meeting together for common study, discussion, prayer, witness and common involvement in the socio-political field, and are challenging each other. The other living faiths or religions and ideologies today also raise radical questions against the exclusive and absolute claims of the Christian Churches whose dialogue with them is a powerful source of change. More radical challenges are, perhaps, coming from the contemporary world, from the new society and culture which are today undergoing revolutionary changes under the influence of contemporary science, technology and the advance of human sciences. And in fact, the changes made by the Second Vatican Council was a response to the radical changes in the world today.

It is going to be twentyfive years since the Second Vatican Council was concluded. And yet many of the things proposed by the Council and their practical applications remain really unimplemented. In the practical life and functioning of the Church we have not yet moved away from the pyramidal model to a conciliar and communion model. The fact that things are more and more controlled and tightened from above, that the majority candidates for higher ecclesiastical positions in some countries were turned down, that the liturgical reforms demanded by the vast majority are held up, that more and more theologians are silenced — all these are indications that the Church is still functioning in a pyramidal and monarchical way. How is the episcopal collegiality taught by the Council implemented? What is the status and authority of the Roman Synod? In the spirit of collegiality could

it not be more than a mere consultative body? What is the authority of the National or Regional episcopal Conferences? Why should it be less than that of the Provincial Synods of the early centuries? Have the Bishops become autocrats in their local Churches? How do the diocesan pastoral councils really function? If the faith of the entire People of God is the basis of the Church's infallible teaching as taught by *Lumen Gentium* (no. 12), what is the role of the People in the decision-making, even in matters with regard to faith and morals? If local Churches are the result of an incarnation of the Gospel, the Word of God, in a particular place, people and culture, they cannot be carbon copies of the mother Church. What is the actual situation today? Why did the process of inculturation initiated in several Churches immediately after the Council suffer a set-back or why was it suppressed from above? If humanization and integral liberation are constitutive of evangelization and mission why was liberation theology not given enough recognition and official approval? Why don't the third world theologies get enough respectability? Could the theologies of Rahner and the galaxy of brilliant western theologians save the faith of the western Christians? With all these great theologies how many per centage of western Christians do really believe in and practise their faith? We cannot discuss all these questions and challenges here. We would limit ourselves to a few of them.

The Church in the New Testament was a local community of Jesus' disciples who were intimately united with Jesus and with one another. This *koinonia* or fellowship in actual life was expressed, celebrated and enhanced by the community's rules, rituals, liturgies, doctrines, theologies etc. Both the etymological and real meaning of the word *ekklesia* was "assembly", "gathering", "fellowship" and "community". Paul wrote to the Corinthians that they could not be a Church unless there was real fellowship among them. Unfortunately in the history of the Church we have either too much spiritualized this concept of fellowship or institutionalized it. The local Christian community has become merely a "spiritual fellowship" especially around the eucharistic table. Sharing in all aspects of life in the one community has been reduced to an invisible and spiritual fellowship in Christ by the partici-

pation in the same sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist. It is actually a distortion of the real meaning of the sacraments which are supposed to celebrate our fellowship and call for deeper sharing in actual life. Our liturgical sharing of the thin bread has become a substitute for the sharing of the thick bread with our neighbour in actual life. Eucharist has become a sacrament to passify our guilt-feeling coming out of our refusal to share our actual life with others. The Church has to be *ekklesia*, a real community in each place. This is the greatest challenge of today.

On the other hand at the so-called "universal" level the Church has become too much institutionalized. Whether in Rome or in Geneva or in any ordinary diocesan head-quarters, the Church appears to be a very big institution with massive buildings, properties, land, hundreds of employees, funds and meticulous organizational set-up controlled by bureaucrats, aided by the most sophisticated computers and so on. This institutionalism has invaded the "little flock" and killed its spirit of real fellowship. The Universal Church has become a centralized institutional set-up, headed by its highest official or authority at the top. This seems to be a distortion of the concept of the "Church Universal". The local church is fully the Church, and it is not a part or administrative unit of the one institutional-universal Church. The Universal Church finds its concrete expression in every local Church and therefore, every local Church is universal in its openness to the other local Churches. Universality of the Church is thus a dimension of the local Church, concretely expressed in its fellowship with all the other local Churches. In other words, Universal Church is the fellowship of all the local Churches. Openness to the other is what makes the Church universal and catholic.

This new understanding of the relationship between the local and universal immediately raises several issues: The first is the autonomy and autocephaly of each local Church which is not under any other local Church. What is real "local Church"? Or When does a Church become really "local" is another related question. When the Christian faith becomes

incarnated in the life of a particular people in their particular socio-cultural setting, they become a local Church. Another issue is the present role of Rome or papacy among the different local Churches. The Roman Church is only one among the many local Churches. It cannot claim a special universality which others do not have. A local Church becomes universal and catholic not by the mere acceptance of the doctrine of papal primacy and by submitting itself to the Pope, but by its communion with all the other local Churches. The bishop of Rome or papacy played a historical role in this communion of all the Churches. So the Pope today is a symbol and focal point of this universal communion, a humble instrument and servant of the universal communion. It requires a new concept of papacy and a new style of its functioning.

The local Church becomes a *Church* when it has formed a real community or fellowship of people which is open to others, and it becomes *local* when it has become incarnated in the life and culture of the people of that place. This process of the Church becoming fully incarnated in the culture of the place is called "inculturation". The early Churches like the Jewish Church of Jerusalem, the Hellenistic Churches, the Gentile Churches, the Roman Church, the North-African Churches, the Byzantine Churches, the Syrian Churches, the Church of Thomas Christians in India etc., are the great examples of inculturation. Wherever the Gospel was preached to a new people and responded by them in faith, a new Church was born there and it gradually acquired a new form and identity rooted in their own social and cultural traditions. There are three different stages in this encounter between the Gospel and the new culture: In the first stage the new culture never meets the Gospel as pure Gospel, but in the cultural garb of the preacher or the evangelizer. This first encounter is in fact between two cultural worlds—the culture of the evangelizer and that of the evangelized. In the second stage or moment the recipient culture tries to discern and assimilate the essence of the Gospel and to distinguish it from the cultural garb of the missionary and to express it both in the life-style and categories of the new culture. This leads to a third stage, the transformation of the recipient's culture which acquires a new spirit, orientation and vitality from the power

of the Gospel. In this process the Gospel too will be in a sense enriched by another original cultural expression of it, enhancing thus its catholicity.

Unfortunately this process of the inculturation of the Churches was discontinued from the 9th century onwards due to the centralization, fixation and insistence on uniformity in the Church and due to a certain theological thinking therein so that by that period the formation of the different liturgical families and that of the individual Churches was over and the fixed and ready-made products could be simply taken to other lands and peoples to be copied. During the colonial period the western missionaries fulfilled this task by planting the Churches in the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America and these new Churches were made the exact replicas of the western Churches. Conquest mentality of the colonial powers, superiority complex of the Western European culture, total ignorance of the values of the new peoples' cultures, lack of sufficient number of the local clergy, and the ecclesiastical administration exclusively by the foreign bishops, all these factors prevented the inculturation process during the colonial period. Today with the end of the colonial era and with the independence of the new nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America, the Churches in these countries too have become conscious of their own identity and autonomy, and the inculturation process is an imperative today.

Inculturation should be given top priority in Indian Churches today as the Indian ecclesial situation is very paradoxical. India is well-known for its very ancient and rich cultural, philosophical, spiritual, and religious traditions. But the Churches in India have not yet taken these traditions seriously and are not yet really inculturated. On the contrary the Indian Churches are mere extensions or offshoots of the Roman Church or Syrian Church or German Lutheran Church or American Baptist Church. They are more Roman or Syrian or German than Indian in their patterns of worship, theology, Church structures and ways of spirituality. Even the ancient St. Thomas Christians of Kerala, although they were once very much inculturated in the socio-cultural traditions of the land, today just copy the liturgy of the Chaldeans,

and never venture on creating an Indian eucharistic liturgy. It is our present task today to develop an Indian type of the Church, Indian in theology, in doctrinal formulations, in Church structures, in patterns of ministry, in worship, in the way of spirituality and in life-style. As India has different peoples and cultures, naturally there may be the possibility of a variety of Indian ecclesial types, and not necessarily one single type. The fact that we have in India today three different ecclesial types within the Catholic Church — the Syro-Malabar, Latin and Syro-Malankara — should not be seen as a threat or danger but as a blessing and opportunity in this pluralistic age. Their task is to become fully Indian, each in its own way, and that implies the possibility of a variety of Indian ecclesial types.

The challenges to Catholic ecclesiology from the other Churches and from the ecumenical movement are many: The Second Vatican Council acknowledged that "all those justified by faith through baptism are incorporated into Christ. They therefore have a right to be called by the title of Christian, and are properly regarded as brothers in the Lord by the sons of the Catholic Church" (*Decree on Ecumenism*, No. 3). But the Council gave an equal status only to the Orthodox Churches which were generously called "Sister Churches", having different "ways" in worship, discipline, theology and so on. The Protestant Churches were not given a similar status, but were called "ecclesial communities" having some or many of the "ecclesial elements". The Council took only a first step towards the unity of all the Churches. The mutual recognition and intercommunion among the different Churches must be established. The papal primacy is the greatest obstacle and perhaps the only serious obstacle to unity between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches. It is a hopeful sign that theologians are today speaking about the possibility of an "ecumenical papacy" having no direct jurisdiction over other Churches, but exercising a Petrine ministry at the service of unity. Besides papacy there are other problems between the Catholic and Protestant Churches and these have been thoroughly studied by various ecumenical conferences and study groups. The serious obstacle to mutual recognition and intercommunion is centred around Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry.

The Lima Document on "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" prepared by the World Council of Churches contains the doctrinal convergence as well as some of the challenges to the Catholic understanding on the sacraments and ministry. The Catholic and Orthodox Churches teach that there are seven sacraments but the Protestant Churches accept only the two sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist as instituted by Christ. Is this question of the number of sacraments an unsurmountable difficulty or can we accept here a diversity of views as well as practice? After all, the number of sacraments was fixed only in the 13th century by the Council of Lyons. The Church is the fundamental sacrament, the depository of all sacraments, and sacramental practices gradually developed in the Church. But even the Catholic Church does not consider all the seven sacraments as of equal importance. Moreover, many Protestant Churches, in fact, practise other sacramental rites too, though they may not call them sacraments officially. Concerning Baptism the only issue is infant baptism v adult baptism. Could we not accept both practices as legitimate and valid? Similarly united in the same basic Eucharistic faith, can we not accept different understandings, explanations, practices and devotions around the Eucharist as legitimate and complementary? In fact none of the theories could adequately and exhaustively explain the ineffable mystery of Christ's presence and gift in the Eucharist. The Catholic Church is challenged to revise its traditional position on intercommunion. Could we not grant intercommunion at least on special occasions to mark our common growth and fellowship in the ecumenical movement? With regard to the ministry we have already pointed out the historical development of the patterns of ministry in the Church. Could we not say that the one and the same apostolic ministry is today continued and exercised in the different Churches under various names and forms? Could we say that the essence of the Apostolic Succession does not consist in the mere unbroken succession in episcopal ordinations but in the enduring continuity of the Apostolic Tradition of which the visible unbroken continuity is only an external, visible sign? Well, the immediate challenge is this: Is the Catholic Church ready to accept the validity of the non-episcopal ministries of the other Churches?

There are three more questions coming from the other Churches concerning equality and freedom in the Catholic Church: If the whole community of the people of God is the deposit of the Church's faith and not the apostles and their successors alone, if the community's sense of faith is the basis of the infallibility of the Church, well, what is the role of the laity in the decision-making bodies of the Church like synods and ecumenical councils even when they make decisions on matters of faith? In the CSI and CNI Synods which are the highest authoritative bodies of those Churches the majority members are the laity, both men and women. The second question is on the ordained ministry of women. Is there any doctrinal and theological reason for denying the ordained ministry to women? Historical and sociological reasons and factors that came from the patriarchal societies can be understood, and indeed, in this case it was the social custom which came into the Bible rather than the Bible that controlled the practice of the Church. When the structures of the patriarchal societies are changing, should not the Church also change? In many Protestant Churches today women are admitted to the ordained ministry including the episcopate. The third question is about the law of compulsory priestly celibacy which is practised today only in the Catholic Church and in none of the other Churches both Orthodox and Protestant. Is it not better for today to make it optional in the Catholic Church?

Christian understanding of other faiths or religions is another area which faces great challenges today. The Second Vatican Council taught that salvation is available also to those who belong to other faiths and to those who live according to the dictates of their conscience (*Lumen Gentium*, No. 16). It means that salvation is no more limited within the four walls of the Church. God's salvific plan and loving care envelop and fill the whole universe. If God is the ultimate source of everything in this world, who inspires the life and culture of all peoples, how can we see the living religions of humanity outside the ambit of God's work? Do the living faiths not play a role in God's plan of salvation? If so how should we understand the meaning of the plurality of religions? What should be the relationship among these different religions? What is

the relationship between Christianity and other religions? What is the meaning of Christ for other faiths? These are important questions today in our religiously pluralistic situation. A new theology of religions will definitely challenge many of our ecclesiological assumptions.

Acceptance of religious pluralism has also challenged the traditional concept and practice of mission. If all the authentic religions are, under the providence of God, legitimate "ways of salvation", Christianity cannot claim to be the only true religion and Christian mission should not be simply understood as proselytism or mere Church extension. The mission of the Church is to be understood as the continuation of the mission and ministry of Jesus. Jesus' mission was to proclaim the arrival of the Kingdom of God and share with the people the gifts and fruits of the Kingdom. Kingdom of God is God's rule under which all have love, justice, freedom and equality and the whole humanity is gathered into one family. If the Church's mission is the increasing realization of the Kingdom of God, or a Kingdom-centred mission and not a Church-centred one, today we should develop a new mission theology and a new missionary style and praxis. All religions should join hands today for the transformation of this world and for the creation of a new society called by the name "Kingdom of God" in the Biblical tradition, which may be called by other names and visions in other traditions. Dialogue among the different religions and ideologies with a common commitment to humanity, struggles for the integral liberation in a world marked by heightened socio-economic injustice and exploitation, commitment to peace and unity of the whole humankind torn apart by various divisive forces and concern for the sanity and integrity of nature which is polluted and destroyed in highly disproportionate measures are therefore integral parts of evangelization today. All these call for an "ecu-

menical ecumenism" and concrete action programmes in each place where all people belonging to various Churches, religions, ideologies, castes and colours must be brought together and new models of ecumenical fellowship must be created. What can the Church do about it? This is perhaps the greatest challenge of our time.

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An Apology

Readers of the May Issue of *Jeevadhara* may have found portions of Noel Sheth's article, "The Child Krishna", somewhat puzzling and frustrating. There were gaps and inconsistencies, and unfulfilled promises. This is no fault of the author. The editor takes responsibility for the shortcomings. He has had to abridge the original text, omitting some episodes and some comments, and abbreviate some footnotes or leave out others, with the result that the information they provide has become defective. The editor hereby apologises to the author and to our readers, and requests them kindly to excuse the failings resulting from inadvertence and haste.

Editor

Book Reviews

1. *Church, Kingdom, World: The Church as Mystery and Prophetic Sign.* Gennadios Limouris (Ed.), WCC, Geneva; PP. 209; 1986; \$ 11. 95.

This book is a collection of papers on the theme, "Church as Mystery and Prophetic Sign" taken up by Faith and Order consultation held at Chantilly, France, in January 1985, in which fourteen theologians from different churches have presented papers in view of arriving at a common thrust, namely, "to develop the conviction that the inter-relation between the Church and the human community is not merely a matter of external relationships, of function and of activities of the Christian community. Rather, the relation between the Church and the human community should be conceived as basically rooted in the nature, place and calling of the Church in the Triune God's saving plan for the whole of humanity".

In the first article Günther Grassmann discusses the concept of the Church as Sacrament, Sign and Instrument. He points out that this terminology is acceptable in the ecumenical debate inasmuch as it indicates anything except a triumphalistic understanding of the church, like the total identification of the church with Jesus Christ, and the Church with the Kingdom.

In his paper "The Church as Mystery and Sign in relation to the Holy Trinity - in ecclesiological perspectives", Gennadios Limouris, discusses the urgent need for an inclusive ecclesiology. Today the Christian world is in quest of unity, which consequently leads to a quest of an acceptable ecclesiology. This is sought in view of a mission, which the Faith and Order Commission spells out thus: "to proclaim the oneness of the Church of Jesus Christ and to call the churches to the visible unity of one faith and eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and in common life in Christ, in order that the world may believe".

Limouris holds that the mystery of the Church can neither be defined nor fully described. But the steadfast joy of people who discover new life and salvation in Christ through the Church reminds us that the Church itself is a lived experience. It does not exist by itself and its goal is devoid of content unless it is seen within the frame work of God's all-encompassing purpose for the Church and the world. Following this line of thought, Limouris describes the relation between God and the Church under three headings:

- a) Church as an 'icon' of the Holy Trinity
- b) Church as the 'body of Christ'
- c) Church as the continued Pentecost.

Manas Buthelezi presents a short paper on "The Church as a Prophetic Sign". At first he speaks about what a 'sign' is. He rightly points out that a sign participates in the reality of the thing to which it points. He applies this analogy to the Church. "The Church or believers corporately are a sign of Christ. The church is the body of Christ although it cannot be said to be all of it. To that extent the Church is a sign: it is what is visible of the body of Christ. The Church is an example of a sign that participates in the reality of what it signifies. It is in the world and yet not of the world. Like all true signs the Church points beyond itself, that is, to its Lord. Its ministry in the world is a sign of the acts of God".

Buthelezi understands the ministry of the Church as liberating the truth and living for others. It is in this way it can truly live as a prophetic sign in the world.

The book contains papers and responses by the theologians of different churches. The reading makes the reader participate in the dialogue and further convinces him to believe in the ecumenical movement.

2. *The Church in Anguish: Has the Vatican Betrayed Vatican II?* Hans Küng and Leonard Swidler (eds.) Harper & Row Publishers, San Francisco, 1987; 324 pp; \$ 16. 95.

This book contains twenty-six articles written by eminent theologians both clerical and lay. With one exception all of them are catholics. Twelve of these twenty-six articles were published earlier in German language under the title *Katholische Kirche-Wohin? Wider Den Verrat am Konzil* by Piper GmbH&Co., KG, München, 1986.

The book under discussion has three sections: The first part lashes against the policies of the Roman Curia and the negative impact it has created through its repressive regime. "The theologians in troubled waters" marks the content of the second part. The cases of battered theologians like Hans Küng, Jacques Pohier, Edward Schillebeeckx, Leonardo Boff, Charles Curran and the friction between Pope John Paul II and U. S. Women Religious are well treated by the experts. The third part has an alarming title: "The American Scene: A Would-be Wasteland". It reflects on the autocratic measures taken by Pope John Paul II on people mentioned in the second section; a few others like Terry Sweeney, a Jesuit sociologist, and the case of Archbishop Hunthausen of Seattle are brought up along with a bitter memory of Pope's responsibility during his 1979 September visit, where he forbade women to serve as ministers of the Eucharist while celebrating the Eucharist on the Mall in Washington D. C. This book was published in 1987 as a protest on the eve of Pope John Paul II's visit to the United States in September 1987.

In the very opening chapter itself, Hans Kung, whose catholicity was questioned by Rome, gives out a dramatic portrayal of the present state of affairs at the Vatican and its negative consequences upon the entire catholic world. After discussing a number of burning issues Kung proves the irrelevance of the Roman curia and its function today. Hence he suggests: *Ceterum censeo Romanam Curiam esse reformandam!*

In view of a radical change he hopes for a Second Council of Jerusalem which will serve new wine in fresh wine skins.

The book provides the factual fate of current theological affairs and reveals its anxiety about the future of theology. It serves as a warning to the entire theological world about its work, its vision and its relationship to the Magisterium. The last article gives a solution to the present friction as Democracy, Dissent and Dialogue which will make the Catholic Church truly Catholic.

Raja Rao